

Employee Spotlight: Bryant Roybal

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Champion chile

New Mexico's first green chile stew champion, Bryant Roybal, is proud to add first prize at the First Annual Great Bowls of Fire Chili Cookoff on February 14, 2015, to his growing list of awards for his chile recipes. Roybal, who works for the Laboratory's Associate Directorate for Project Management, has been a chile competition contestant ever since entering the Hot Chili Days, Cool Mountain Nights Cookoff in Red River in 2011 and immediately taking first prize.

"It's been a fun few years," Roybal reports, "and winning the inaugural state-wide Green Chile Stew Competition at the New Mexico State Fair in September 2014 definitely was one of the highlights. Being the first such champion in a state famous for its chile means a lot to me."

Roybal credits his late grandmother Macadia Trujillo for his award-winning green chile stew recipe. "Back in the day, the Trujillo family didn't have much money," Roybal

explains, “but they had plenty of Pojoaque Valley land to grow vegetables that sustained everyone through the winters. As harvest time came, they would pick their green chile, roast it and use it for many dishes.”

Roybal recalls going over to his grandmother’s house on Sunday mornings after church. “I can still picture grandma’s kitchen table with all my brothers and sisters waiting for some of her good cooking,” he says. “Nowadays, I make green chile stew for my family year-round using locally grown vegetables and farm-raised meats, and my wife and I have even started our own part-time catering business so others can enjoy what I did growing up. We also offer different types of BBQ and smoked meats now and a variety of delicious side dishes.”

While the recipes of other green chile stew competitors sometimes tend toward the exotic with ingredients like beer or corn, Roybal likes the simplicity of relying on only three main staples: chile, pork and potatoes.

“But I go the extra mile,” Roybal notes, “by using different types of chile—what I call my ‘Harvest Blend’—to add texture, depth and varying levels of heat.”

The recipe

Roybal’s award-winning green chile stew recipe starts with the following ingredients to serve 10 to 12 hungry people:

- 2 pounds of Roybal’s Harvest Blend: Roasted, stemmed, peeled and diced green chile, ripe green chile (red), jalapeños, ripe jalapeños, yellow hots and Hungarian chile
- 2 pounds center cut pork chops, diced into 1/4-inch pieces
- 4 large potatoes, peeled and diced into 1/4-inch squares
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- Salt, pepper, garlic salt and other spices to taste
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons flour
- About 4–6 cups water

Once everything is assembled, Roybal gets out a frying pan to sauté the pork with half of the oil and some of the spices. When the meat is golden- to medium-brown, he transfers it to a large stock pot and saves the meat drippings for later.

“Grandma Trujillo raised pigs to serve as the family’s major source of protein,” Roybal explains, “so I’m partial to using pork for the stew, but beef or chicken would be other options.”

Roybal next sautés the potatoes in a separate frying pan with the rest of the oil until golden-brown, then adds them to the stock pot along with the chile, tomatoes and water and sets the stove to low.

“The acidity from the tomatoes tempers some of the Harvest Blend’s spiciness,” Roybal says. “You can experiment with the right amount. When I make the stew for myself, I prefer it quite hot and leave out the tomatoes altogether.”

Roybal is now ready to prepare a golden- to medium-brown roux with the meat drippings and flour before adding the roux, too, to the stock pot. Finally, he brings the pot to medium heat, stirs everything and, if needed, adds more water and spices for proper consistency and taste.

He covers the pot and lets the stew simmer until he's ready to serve it as a main dish, side dish or on top of any other dish, accompanied by tortillas, rolls or bread.

"I love to cook," Roybal says with a smile. "I'm the family cook at home, and I've been cooking for all of our family gatherings for a long time. Everybody is always very appreciative, and winning the competitions has been another great blessing."

Roybal works for the Associate Directorate for Project Management's TA-55 Reinvestment Project

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